

Statement of Steven Bagley
Student: Lewis S. Mills High School, Burlington, CT
to the Education Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
29 February 2008

Chairman Senator Gaffey, Chairman Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today at this hearing on the Genocide Awareness Education bill.

My name is Steven Bagley and I am 17 years old. I live in a middle class neighborhood with block parties every year and food on the table every night. My life has been one opportunity after another and I can sleep peacefully at night knowing that I am safe.

Despite the privileges and comfort of my life, I have seen parts of life that others may never know; poverty, hunger, homelessness, abandonment, the feeling of being unloved. This is what we as a people have to fight against.

I work as a camp counselor during the summer and my salary is laughable. Last year the money that could have gone into my and the other counselor's paycheck went to host people from Darfur and Cambodia instead. What I learned from the guests we hosted is invaluable. These people must hope for things that I take for granted. They hope that they will survive just one more day. They live with the hope of being able to pull some sort of a life out of the rift caused by a war that has left thousands dead, raped, or both I have seen:

- Burns on the back of the 12 year old little boy because they set fire to his house while he was still in it
- Scars on the women who were raped and beaten in their own home
- Starvation
- Homes destroyed, burial grounds destroyed

I am lucky to have learned about this at summer camp, as it has shaped my interest and passion for active citizenship. This education needs to be part of the curriculum for all students, so that more are moved to action.

We turn on the news and we see all of the terrible things people are doing to each other. We can't go a day without seeing a list of all our fallen heroes. Death is everywhere and sometimes we have the feeling we may never get out of this spiral. But this downward spiral needs to end, we need to stop this madness and help these people. Help speak out for those who can't speak for themselves. Uphold the promise of **never again** because this is all these people have to hang on to.

I speak today because tomorrow is never promised to us. I speak today because I do not want to see my children grow up in a world where genocide continues and they missed out on the relief effort because they simply didn't even know what a Darfur was. We need to save them by saving ourselves first.

Please pass this bill, please provide funding for this bill. Our teachers need to be prepared to make history and civics lessons relevant so that students are prepared to one day fill your shoes as leaders. Please, help prepare us.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am prepared to answer any questions.

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: *Steven Bagley*

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